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SUBJECT: IRAQI ELECTION LAW UPDATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2009

REF: BAGHDAD 2951

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Gary A. Grappo for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a day of reduced engagements as most Iraqis attended Friday prayers, poloffs learned that parliamentarians appear to be waiting on the Kurds' reaction to the November 5 election law compromise proposal (Ref A), to which all parties had agreed in principle and on which Speaker Ayad al-Samarra'i intends to call a vote November 7. The Ambassador and UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert are closely coordinating next steps, with the Embassy continuing to corral various parties to adhere to the November 5 agreement and Melkert scheduled to see Speaker Samarra'i tomorrow morning, just hours ahead of the planned vote. The Embassy and UNAMI will need to be perceived as exerting equal pressure on all parties in order to provide political cover for each to finalize agreement on an election law. END SUMMARY.

State of Play  
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¶2. (C) Omar al-Mashhadani, senior political and media advisor to Samarra'i, reported to poloff November 6 that Deputy Speaker Arif Tayfour and acting Kurdish Alliance List (KAL) bloc leader Friad Rwanduzi told Samarra'i they would respond to the November 5 proposal by the morning of November 7. Mashhadani told poloff that he and Samarra'i believe that if the Kurds accept the proposal, then the Sunni Arabs and Turkomans are likely to agree to it as well. Mashhadani offered that a point of contention for the Kurds had been their "misunderstanding" regarding the formula for assigning compensatory seats designated for Sunni Arabs and Turkomans, and that clarification of that point in the November 5 proposal had been helpful to the Kurds.

¶3. (C) Deputy Legal Committee Chairman MP Salim al-Jabouri (IIP) told poloff that, during a November 6 meeting Samarra'i reported to the Legal Committee that there were "some positive signals" that Sunni Arabs, Turkomans, and Kurds were edging toward final agreement on the November 5 proposal. According to Jabouri, Samarra'i told the Legal Committee that he is counting on the United States to deliver Kurdish acceptance of the November 5 proposal. In addition, Jabouri said that Samarra'i emphasized the need for a vote in the Council of Representatives (COR) on November 7. Jabouri told poloff that he had spoken with Kirkuki MPs Omar al-Jabouri and Muhammad al-Tamim; they confirmed to Jabouri that the two Sunni Arab/Turkoman concerns with the current text of the November 5 agreement are: (1) the reference to including a member of the Article 140 Committee on the special committee to review voter registration lists and (2) language that permits voter registry reviews in provinces other than Kirkuk.

¶4. (C) Muhammed Najjar, UNAMI political officer, said that Samarra'i had told him that "everyone is

waiting on the Kurds" to respond. Late November 5, Sunni Arabs and Turkomans had appeared to be reconsidering their acceptance in principle of the November 5 agreement; however, Najjar confirmed Embassy's sense that the Sunni Arab/Turkoman objections were not/not definitive, and that they were waiting for the Kurds' reaction before giving any further indication of their position. In interactions in Erbil, the Ambassador's Senior Advisor for Northern Iraq urged KRG interlocutors, including KRG President Barzani's Senior Advisor Fuad Hussein, to accept the November 5 proposal. As of late Friday, the Kurds had voiced no objections but had not formally decided to approve it. We have also heard from Barzani's party (currently in Vienna) Qhave also heard from Barzani's party (currently in Vienna) that he will support the November 5 language.

15. (C) In several conversations with SRSg Melkert, the Ambassador pressed for the November 7 COR vote. Melkert reported he was equally determined to see the vote take place and both planned to press Samarra'i to go forward with it on Saturday. Both UNAMI and the Mission will dispatch teams to the COR on Saturday to track events and push for adoption of the amendments.

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